



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Planning & Development Committee  
March 18, 2013**

**COST urges *support* for SB-1112 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE PUBLICATION OF LEGAL NOTICES BY MUNICIPALITIES**

COST strongly *supports* SB-1112 which will allow towns to post full legal notices on their websites and limit publication in the newspapers to a summary of the notices, saving towns between \$5,000 and \$35,000 per year.

Mandate relief is a top priority for Connecticut's suburban and rural towns. Connecticut will not be able to enact true property tax reform unless it recognizes the burden it places on towns and cities by passing unfunded state mandates. Connecticut's small towns and cities are once again facing enormous pressure to hold the line on local budget and property tax increases although local pension and benefit costs are rising. While we recognize that the state is not in a position to increase municipal aid, it can act now to relieve some of the burden on our small towns and cities by addressing long-standing concerns with unfunded mandates.

The cost of publishing legal notices in the newspapers has increased significantly. Input from our small towns indicates that towns spend between \$5,000 and \$35,000 each year to publish legal notices in newspapers. Moreover, many newspapers serving small towns and cities are no longer in business, forcing towns to publish notices in the more expensive metropolitan newspapers. Increasingly, taxpayers go to their municipal websites to find up-to-date information on issues affecting towns, including legal notices.

Opponents of the measure indicate that the bill may create concerns regarding the authenticity of the legal notice. However, recognizing that there are methods for authenticating an electronic record to ensure that it is unaltered from the official record published, Connecticut law recognizes the validity of electronic documents under the Connecticut Uniform Electronic Transactions Act, Section 1-272, CGS, adopted in 2001.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. COST looks forward to working with lawmakers to enact meaningful measures to help towns reduce costs and hold the line on property taxes.

*COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut's suburban and rural towns.*